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New York

President:	Mr. Baja	(Philippines)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Benin	Mr. Adechi
	Brazil	Mr. Valle
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	France	Mr. de La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Spain	Mr. De Palacio España
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Holliday

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1521 (2003) regarding Liberia (S/2004/428)

Third progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2004/430 and Corr.1)

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04-37373 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of June, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to Mr. Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, for his service as President for the month of May 2004. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Mr. Akram for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1521 (2003) regarding Liberia (S/2004/428)

Third progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2004/430 and Corr.1)

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 37 of its provisional rules of procedure to invite Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Klein to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members have before them the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1521 (2003) regarding Liberia, document S/2004/428, and the third progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia, document S/2004/430.

At this meeting, the Security Council will first hear a briefing by Mr. Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia, and then by Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia.

At the end of those briefings, I will give the floor to those Council members who wish to make comments or ask questions.

As there is no list of speakers for this meeting, I invite Council members who wish to take the floor to so indicate to the Secretariat as from now.

I give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia, Mr. Jacques Paul Klein.

Mr. Klein (*spoke in French*): I have the pleasure today of reporting to the Council on the progress achieved since the start of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). In so doing, I would like to introduce the two reports of the Secretary-General before the Council: the third progress report on the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the report prepared pursuant to Security Council resolution 1521 (2003).

(*spoke in English*)

I am grateful to you, Mr. President, and to all members of the Council for having graciously agreed to receive Chairman Gyude Bryant, who is a valued supporter of UNMIL and whom I would like to commend, in great privacy, for the positive steps which he has led the Transitional Government to take in difficult early stages of his great mission. His presence here today will give the Council the opportunity to hear

from the Chairman himself the steps taken by the National Transitional Government of Liberia in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and the Chairman's vision for taking Liberia through this period of transition to the October 2005 elections.

Given the state of chaos, insecurity and collapsed governmental structure at the time we arrived in Liberia seven months ago, our immediate priority was to stabilize the country by progressively deploying troops throughout its entirety, disarming the armed groups through the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) programme, and simultaneously commencing the restructuring of the law and order institutions in order to create the necessary security environment, space for the implementation of other aspects of our mandate and to facilitate the delivery of sorely needed humanitarian assistance. I am pleased to report that the progress we have made on these most pressing priorities has far exceeded our expectations.

The deployment throughout Liberia has greatly improved security along its long and porous borders. UNMIL now has a strong presence along the Guinean-Liberian and Sierra Leonean-Liberian borders and the northern part of the Liberian border with Côte d'Ivoire. We will have full presence on the border contiguous with Côte d'Ivoire when the inbound Ethiopian and Senegalese battalions deploy to the south-east in mid-June.

Similarly, UNMIL's civilian police component is gaining ground. It has expanded considerably to the areas beyond Monrovia, including Roberts International Airport and the main UNMIL sector headquarters in Buchanan, Gbanga, Tubmanburg and Zwedru. The civilian component of UNMIL, although authorized at 607 international staff positions, has only 400 in place. This leaves me with a shortfall of 33 per cent. However, what they lack in quantity, they make up in quality.

The relaunched DDRR programme is progressing without major obstacles. As of 31 May, a total of 38,673 combatants had been disarmed, of those, 13 per cent are children and 18 per cent women. As I indicated earlier, together with those disarmed in December, that represents more than 70 per cent of the estimated 53,000 combatants. A total of 16,065 weapons have also been collected, and 12,858 rounds of heavy ammunition and 3,900,000 rounds of small ammunition have been collected and destroyed.

There are worrying signs, however, that some of the heavy weapons are not as yet being turned in for disarmament. We are determined to ensure that, in the end, all such weapons are surrendered. Another concern is that few non-Liberian combatants are voluntarily disclosing their foreign identities. So far, only 82 have declared themselves. We expect more to gain confidence in the process and identify themselves once the arrangements for their repatriation and remuneration become clear. We are devising those arrangements in consultation with the concerned United Nations agencies in the surrounding countries, preparing reintegration programmes should those individuals choose to return to their countries of origin.

With the aspects of disarmament and demobilization progressing smoothly, the main focus is now on preparations for the reintegration of disarmed combatants. In collaboration with the Transitional Government, United Nations agencies, non-governmental agencies and other parties such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union, short-term bridging projects have been devised to absorb demobilized combatants pending the availability of a long-term reintegration programme. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its partners are currently developing long-term capacity-building programmes for 7,000 child ex-combatants, most of which will focus on education, skills development, apprenticeship and community-based support.

Since we last briefed the Council, there has been considerable progress in the area of security sector reform and the rule of law. UNMIL has assisted in the restoration of the judicial system. Seventeen courts have been reconstituted in Monrovia and its environs. Furthermore, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, we have assisted in improving the facilities and the conditions of the Monrovia Central Prison and to date have trained 50 correctional officers.

Additionally, the United Nations civilian police component has made considerable progress in the restructuring and the retraining of the Liberian National Police. A Rule of Law Implementation Committee has been established to coordinate the reform of the police, judiciary and correctional

institutions, as indicated in the report. The Committee is finalizing the strategy for the reform and the restructuring of Liberian National Police. It has already finalized the eligibility criteria for recruitment into the new police service, and the Transitional Government and UNMIL jointly launched the recruitment process on 5 May. The training of new cadets is to begin on 1 July.

With regard to the restructuring of the army, we are pleased that the Government of the United States has offered to take the lead in assisting and advising the National Transitional Government of Liberia on the implementation of that important task. A few weeks ago, I met with a visiting assessment team from the United States Department of Defence, and we discussed proposals for coordinating our efforts in that regard. UNMIL prepared a draft restructuring scheme and a draft defence policy that are now being reviewed, and follow-up meetings will ensue to ensure a proper, realistic and coordinated approach among all parties concerned.

Since April, UNMIL civil affairs officers have been deployed in various parts of the country, and UNMIL has currently deployed staff to the four sector headquarters, in Tubmanburg, Buchanan, Zwedru and Monrovia. It has also deployed in 10 of the 16 counties. In collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a project proposal has been finalized for the return of government officials to their counties and districts immediately after the disarmament exercise has been completed. The United Nations Development Programme, USAID and the European Union are also involved in sourcing funds for this process.

Preparations for the October 2005 elections have commenced. The seven members of National Elections Commission (NEC) were sworn in on 29 April. UNMIL maintains that Liberia must take ownership of the electoral process. However, the Mission expects to play a key role so that the NEC can avail itself of the substantial material, human and technical resources that we have. In providing support for the electoral process in Liberia, UNMIL will be guided by two key objectives: to assist in the conduct of credible elections with all the necessary expertise and to leave behind a Liberian election management body that has the requisite capacity to continue independently, with minimal international assistance.

Currently, the Mission and other partners are assisting the National Elections Commission to establish its infrastructure in Monrovia and the counties. In accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the NEC, assisted by UNMIL, the Economic Community Of West African States, the European Union and the International Foundation for Election Systems, will have to select the electoral system to be used, finalize the demarcation of constituencies and prepare a draft electoral law for consideration by the National Transitional Government of Liberia and the National Transitional Legislative Assembly. UNMIL is developing a training seminar for NEC commissioners and senior staff on electoral administration and electoral systems.

We also ask the Council to take note of the fact that there are indications that certain individuals in the Government are becoming enamoured of and comfortable in their positions and are becoming somewhat less enthusiastic about the timing of the October 2005 elections. The Council needs to reiterate its strong support for the October 2005 election date and its insistence that the elections will be held as scheduled.

The three mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement — namely the Joint Monitoring Committee, the Implementation Monitoring Committee and the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) — have played a significant role in complementing the role of UNMIL. On 11 May, the ICGL met in London and expressed satisfaction at the progress made, especially the successful relaunching of the DDRR programme.

Developments in the surrounding countries are of concern to us as they can impact negatively on the peace process in Liberia. Thus, we are much encouraged by the efforts of the Chairman, who is working with the leaders of the neighbouring States — Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone — to improve their multilateral relationships. In that context as well, we have adopted a regional approach for addressing several of the cross-border issues between those countries. Hence, in cooperation with our colleagues in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), we are taking concrete measures to enhance inter-mission cooperation, in particular the sharing of assets and military information. My Force Commander,

Lieutenant-General Daniel Opande, has met three times with his counterparts in UNAMSIL and the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI). There have also been three meetings of regional Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, hosted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. A working group on inter-mission cooperation has been established to effect close cooperation on cross-border issues, and the Mission and the French army in Côte d'Ivoire have exchanged military liaison officers. As per the direction of the Secretary-General, a detailed study on enhancing all aspects of pursuing a regional approach in implementing our mandate will be prepared for submission to the Council later this year.

The improved security situation in recent months and the resumption of the disarmament process have enabled humanitarian agencies and human rights groups to extend their activities to areas that were formerly inaccessible. Also due to the improved security situation, displaced people and refugees are returning to their former homes.

Some refugees have returned from the surrounding countries, especially Sierra Leone, and almost 80,000 internally displaced persons have returned spontaneously, out of a possible caseload of 316,000. Others too have returned on their own and have been assisted by UNMIL and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees when they become stranded on their way home. That was the case with some 300 refugees stranded in Mali, who had to be airlifted to Liberia, and, more recently, the 350 refugees who were rescued from a foundering vessel off the coast of Côte d'Ivoire. We are discouraging these piecemeal, self-initiated approaches and are working in collaboration with the UNHCR in support of a broad and organized process of return. The main challenge now for the humanitarian agencies is a lack of resources for quickly moving relief assistance to newly accessible areas. That said, I must commend the World Food Programme, which feeds 600,000 people in Liberia every day, including 284,000 individuals belonging to vulnerable groups — the rest being internally displaced persons.

UNICEF continues to support the Ministry of Education in its back-to-school campaign, which aims to return an estimated 1 million children to their classrooms by the end of 2004. As of this May, the campaign has provided basic equipment and supplies, including more than 8,000 school-in-a-box kits to 3,700 schools for 622,000 children and 20,000 teachers. As well, since June 2003, more than 1.24 million children under the age of 15 have been immunized against measles.

Significant efforts are still required to restore public concerns and to revive the economy. However, the commercial and informal sectors have increased substantially. We are encouraged by the progress made since the donors conference of 5 and 6 February. Chairman Bryant will elaborate on the work of his Ministers to implement the Results-based Transitional Framework. However, the level of pledges redeemed by donors remains disappointingly low. As of 24 May, up to $60 million had been received of the $520 million pledged in New York last February for the two-year transitional period.

Before I conclude, let me make a few remarks related to the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1521 (2003) regarding Liberia (S/2004/428).

As part of its mandate, UNMIL has continued to monitor progress made by the Transitional Government to put in place mechanisms to ensure the proper management of two key natural resource industries, namely diamonds and timber, which are both under United Nations sanctions. In this context, an important message I would like to leave with the Security Council is that the National Transitional Government of Liberia badly needs reliable sources of revenue in order to function effectively. Liberia's long-term security and stability will come only with an economy that is robust enough to create steady employment for young adult males, supported by a responsible credible, democratic and accountable Government. It is therefore necessary for the international community to provide all necessary support to enable the National Transitional Government of Liberia to meet the requirements of Council resolution 1521 (2003).

Let me conclude by stressing that the Liberia of today is totally different from the Liberia before the arrival of the troops of the Economic Community of West African States Mission in Liberia and, subsequently, of the United Nations. The peace process is now firmly on track and irreversible. UNMIL troops are deployed throughout the country and have significantly stabilized the country, and the disarmament of combatants is making steady progress.

However, there are still numerous challenges ahead. The progress made so far is still fragile. Ensuring complete weapons handover remains a priority. Until the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme and troop deployment process are completed, inter- and intra-factional conflicts may persist in remote parts of the country. The capacity of the Transitional Government to deliver services and to extend its authority throughout the country also remains, at the moment, very limited.

(*spoke in French*)

Despite these challenges, however, I can say that I anticipate no major setbacks in our effort to bring lasting peace and stability to Liberia, especially if resources to facilitate the reintegration of former combatants and national recovery are made available in a timely fashion.

The President: I thank Mr. Klein for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant.

Mr. Bryant (Liberia): I was here in February to present to the international community the Results-Focused Transitional Framework — a composite of the efforts that the Transitional Government of Liberia had exerted in an attempt to resurrect a totally collapsed State. We were encouraged by the overwhelming response of the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, the World Bank and a number of bilateral partners, as measured by the pledges for $522 million. Those pledges are being transformed into action on the ground to produce tangible results for the people of Liberia.

I am here today for one primary reason: to plead with the Council to lift the sanctions on my country.

As we disarm and demobilize our conflict's combatants, there are two critical needs associated with the process.

First, there is the need to rehabilitate ex-combatants, many of whom are lacking in economic survival skills. Following various processes of medical care and counselling, they will be helped to acquire new skills through training.

Secondly, there is a need to reintegrate them into local communities. An entry point in this regard is the creation of jobs to provide work for them. Here, Liberia remembers the lessons of history: ex-combatants who are not meaningfully rehabilitated and reintegrated into society run the risk of being re-recruited into violent crime and conflict. Our evolving fragile democracy simply cannot afford that. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to revive our economy and create jobs in support of the reintegration of ex-combatants and the internally displaced.

This brings me to the issue of the lifting of sanctions. Liberia makes a passionate appeal to the Council today to lift the sanctions on timber and diamonds. We make this appeal while appreciating the motivation for the imposition of the sanctions and in a spirit of full cooperation with the international community in order to address the concerns of the Security Council.

We also make this appeal because the sanctions contribute to the perception that Liberia is very unsafe and dangerous. There is a surcharge on everything imported into Liberia, thus raising the cost of living for my people. That has adverse implications for an orderly transition from conflict to peace.

The forestry sector holds the greatest short-term promise for job creation and the fostering of economic recovery. That sector used to provide over 7,000 jobs, contribute 20 per cent of Government revenues and account for approximately 50 per cent of our foreign exchange earnings. The sanctions on timber continue to hurt us. Sanctions were imposed on Liberian timber for five direct and indirect reasons. The primary reason was that timber resources were being used by the erstwhile Government to purchase arms for the purposes of fuelling conflict within the subregion and of suppressing its own people.

On this issue, we are pleased to report that the war is over and Liberia is now at peace with its neighbours. Rather than purchasing arms, the Transitional Government is currently disarming combatants. Our mission in this respect is to make our society gun-free and to live in harmony with our sister countries of the subregion.

United Nations forces are being deployed throughout the country — they have a visible presence at all sea ports and airports and they are patrolling our borders to ensure that weapons do not re-enter our country.

The Transitional Government is committed to the rule of law, human rights and social justice. This Government is not in the business of suppressing its own people. Despite provocation from detractors, we have remained focused on the major issues of disarmament and reconstruction. We have no political prisoners and no prisoners of conscience. The media is enjoying unprecedented freedom. Ours is indeed a Government of peace, reconstruction and national renewal.

The second concern of the Security Council was the lack of transparency in the awarding of concession agreements. It was the opinion of some members of the international community that concession rights may, in fact, have been granted to fly-by-night investors doing business not in the interests of Liberia but in the interests of the ruling elite and international criminal elements.

On this critical issue, 30 concession agreements have been examined. The first review was undertaken by the Forestry Development Authority, mainly to catalogue the legal and operating status of the 30 companies involved in the sector in 2003.

The second review involved more stakeholders, including environmentalists and conservationists as well as journalists and other international organizations. Five recommendations from that review have been made to the Board and have been endorsed. They are the following. All concessions whose acreage was increased within the period 1997 to 2003 should be reduced to their original size, as contracted with the Forestry Development Authority prior to 1997. Concession areas illegally taken away from others between 1997 and 2003 should be given back to their rightful owners. New concession areas illegally occupied between 1997 and 2003 without satisfaction of then-existing requirements should be withdrawn. All concessionaires indebted to the Government and the Authority should be made to settle their obligations. All concessions should be given a definite time frame in which they can come into conformity with new guidelines and regulations; those who fail to do so will have their concessions revoked through legal process.

Specifically, 24 of the 30 concessionaires have been cleared and will be recertified to recommence operations following their settlement of financial obligations to the Authority and the Government. Additionally, six of the concessionaires have not been cleared due to past gross irregularities and are slated for further investigation and/or legal revocation.

The third concern of the international community was that timber revenues were not being used for the benefit of the Liberian people. That relates to the issue of accountability. Since our incumbency, we have taken measures to ensure that our resources are utilized for the benefit of all our people. We currently have in place Executive Order No. 2. It centralizes the collection of all Government revenues under the authority of the Ministry of Finance and the deposit of all such revenues into the Government's account at the Central Bank of Liberia. Executive Order No. 2 has substantially increased Government revenues and control over those revenues.

Further, we have opened a Government timber revenue account at the Central Bank for stumpage fees and land rental. We have opened another forestry account, also at the Central Bank, for reforestation, conservation and research fees collected within the sector. Accounts at other financial institutions have been closed. The Central Bank accounts will assist us in tracking and monitoring revenues from the sector.

Additionally, the terms of reference of a European-Union-funded audit of the Authority has been commissioned by the Government to recommend new systems that will enhance financial transparency and accountability. It is expected that a more transparent budgetary process will also evolve from that undertaking. The Board of Directors has resolved to hire the services of a certified public accounting firm to develop, install and train Authority staff in the new systems to be recommended by the audit.

Because Liberians are so dependent upon and interact so closely with their local forest resources, my Government is fostering a forest sector reform programme that restores the connection between forest and community. In that direction, we are considering the following: establishing county-level advisory committees intended to provide a channel of communication for communities; developing village wood lots to secure fuel wood supplies for urban communities; and establishing a unit in the Forestry Development Authority responsible for developing and enhancing the flow of forest resources and benefits to the community.

These efforts are an integral part of a community-friendly logging policy that we are currently

developing. That policy will ensure that a percentage of the timber revenues generated goes back to meet the development needs of the local communities where the logs were felled. Those funds will serve as matching resources for the corporate social responsibility funds provided by logging concessions to assist local communities. The primary development needs targeted for those funds are education and training, health and sanitation, and infrastructure. An oversight committee, drawn from relevant sectoral ministries and agencies, will be established to monitor utilization of those funds.

The law requires concessionaires to build community infrastructures such as health facilities and schools. The Government is now considering, at the policy level, the degree of responsibility for community development on the part of concession holders, the national Government and local governments.

The fourth area of concern of the international community has been the low capacity of the Forestry Development Authority to regulate the sector. On that issue, we have put in place a programme to enhance the capacity of the Authority as follows. The Board of Directors has been reconstituted, as recommended by the Timber Sanctions Review Committee. The Board now includes the Minister of Finance, thus linking the Authority with the macroeconomic management of the Government. The Board has approved the creation of two Deputy Managing Director positions, one for protective forestry — conservation — and another for commercial forestry. They will focus, highlight and balance conservation and commercial issues.

The Government has made available to the Authority an initial amount of $350,000 to commence the rehabilitation of its infrastructure. With additional assistance from the United States Office of Transition Initiatives, all five regional offices are being renovated, refurbished and equipped with short wave communication and mobile equipment. Refresher training courses have commenced. One has been undertaken for managers and sectional heads. A second phase now under way includes refresher training for more than 200 forest rangers, scalers, protection forest guides and park wardens. Train-the-trainer courses are also being organized.

We have encouraged the establishment of oversight committees and institutions for monitoring effective sustainable forest management practices, community involvement and environmental impact assessments. In this connection, we are pleased to inform the Council that the Environmental Protection Agency has been established and set up as one of the oversight and monitoring institutions.

While the aforementioned measures are critical for improved governance of the sector, we are also committed to enhancing the regulatory capacity by progressively working towards achieving the following, in partnership with the international initiatives: the evolution of a stronger management team by engaging external experts either through request for secondment or through direct hire as technical assistance experts; the review and revision of forestry commercial levies, as well as strengthening the revenue collection system; the establishment of a web site and creation of a CD-ROM; and beginning the building of a geographic information system/remote-sensing capacity. The fifth area of concern of the international community has been the lack of appreciation for the environment, conservation and biodiversity in forestry operations.

To address these fundamental concerns, our reform programmes now accentuate the environment in the operations of FDA. Primarily, we have adopted a "triple-C" policy — conservation, community and commercial — to henceforth guide us in the exploitation of our forests. This policy seeks to strike a balance between the competing interests of community development, conservation and commercialization. In this context, FDA has endorsed the initiatives of Conservation International, along with 13 non-governmental organizations, and has given these organizations unequivocal access to FDA and its operations.

The Government and Conservation International are now working together to restore Liberia's forest conservation programme. A sequenced landscaping strategy to secure and expand the network of protective areas and national parks has begun. Two national parks — Sapo and Nimba — have been proclaimed and six new target areas have since been identified and protected. A conservation trust fund will be established for these and related purposes. A primary objective of this fund shall be to facilitate biodiversity research.

Finally, we recognize that there are appropriate laws on the books for good governance of the forestry

sector. However, these laws have not been rigidly applied in recent times, thereby creating chaos and leading to the abuse and misuse of our forest resources. Our Government shall henceforth vigorously enforce forestry laws and regulations. Additionally, in concert with our international partners, Liberia will continue to review and implement a strategy of long-term sustainable forest management.

I have laid out for the Council's consideration a series of actions which we have taken and propose to take in order to meet its requirements for lifting sanctions on the export of our timber products. We would like the Council to have its experts visit Liberia within the next 90 days to validate this performance.

Diamond sales are a foreign exchange earner for Liberia. Diamond production, alongside the exploitation of gold, is an economic mainstay for a substantial number of our people. Additionally, on account of Liberia's dual currency regime, in which the United States dollar serves as legal tender alongside the Liberian dollar, diamond dealers and traders from neighbouring countries prefer to do business in our markets. As such, Liberia receives collateral benefits from these transactions.

We have made tremendous progress in satisfying the demands of the Security Council. We have submitted ourselves wholeheartedly to the internationally recognized Kimberly Certification Process. The Process requires participating countries to enact legislation that clearly defines procedures aimed at promoting transparency in the production, sale, importation, transit and exportation of rough diamonds. Our cooperation in this area is known to the Council's own Panel of Experts, which, in paragraph 93 (b) of its most recent report, states that this collaboration between the Diamond High Council and the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy was closely monitored by the Panel.

In compliance with this requirement, an act entitled "An Act Amending the New Minerals and Mining Law, Part I, Title 23, LCLR, By Adding Thereto a New Chapter 40, Providing for Controls on the export, import and transit of Rough Diamonds" has been submitted to the National Transitional Legislative Assembly for enactment into law.

As further assurance to the Council of our total compliance with the Kimberly Process, we have agreed with the Sanctions Review Committee that immediately, upon the lifting of sanctions on diamonds, Liberia will temporarily impose a voluntary embargo on the sale, importation and exportation of rough diamonds until it is Kimberly-certified. Further, in an effort to establish a viable monitoring mechanism for rough diamonds produced in Liberia, the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy is setting up a cooperative mining system within the alluvial mining subsector.

The cooperatives will provide small-scale miners with financial and material support. The cooperatives will, in turn, purchase rough diamonds produced by the miners. As with timber, a percentage of revenue intake from diamond extraction will revert to these communities for development. Under this system, all production will be monitored and regulated. This will enable the Government to trace diamonds produced from the fields to the Diamond Certification Centre at the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy and through to their destination on the international market. A database will be established at the Diamond Certification Centre for effective monitoring, research and planning purposes, as well as to disabuse the international community of the notion that Liberia does not have diamonds. The Government has embarked on extensive training of its mineral inspectors and mining agents, who are expected to play a vital role in monitoring the cooperative scheme.

While we await the decision of the Council with regard to lifting sanctions on diamonds, we take cognizance of the decision of the United States Government to unilaterally lift sanctions on the importation of diamonds from Liberia, and to express our appreciation for that decision. And for the record, I want to make clear that, even though the United States has been generous in doing that, to date there have been no exports of diamonds to the United States in violation of the Council's sanctions.

As I conclude this appeal for the lifting of sanctions, permit me to say a few words of gratitude to this body. The United Nations has been kind to Liberia in many and varying ways. It supported the Accra peace talks and developed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. That accord is currently guiding us in our transition from continuous conflict to sustainable peace and human development. The United Nations continues to provide humanitarian assistance to war-weary Liberians through its specialized agencies. Those agencies are working in collaboration with the Government and with non-governmental organizations.

The United Nations has authorized and now has in place one of the largest peacekeeping forces in its history to disarm combatants as well as to keep and enforce the peace in Liberia. The United Nations co-sponsored the highly successful International Reconstruction Conference for Liberia, held on 5 and 6 February 2004. For all of that, Liberians thank the United Nations from the deepest recesses of their hearts.

May I also take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his personal involvement in resolving the Liberian conflict. Despite other global crises such as those in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East, he has raised the Liberian crisis to the highest level of international concern and has provided diplomatic leadership in rescuing the situation. We are immensely grateful to the Secretary-General for his support and assistance. Leadership is about inspiration, and he continues to inspire us to reject conflict and to build a better society for our people.

Finally, let me assure all members of the Council that, through their support and assistance, Liberia is breaking through. A failed State is being transformed into an emerging democracy. A lawless State is being transformed into a nation that respects human values and is committed to the rule of law. A pariah State is being accepted into the comity of decent nations. And a conflict-prone State is being transformed into a nation of peace — at peace with itself, at peace with its neighbours, at peace with the international community. Liberia is counting on the Council for its continuous understanding and support.

The President: I thank Mr. Bryant for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members who have indicated their wish to speak.

Mr. Holliday (United States of America): On the occasion of the first public meeting since you assumed the Council presidency, Sir, I would like to congratulate you and to express our appreciation for the work of the outgoing President, Ambassador Akram.

My delegation would also like to thank Chairman Bryant and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Klein for their presentations to the Council. We appreciate their presence here today, but, most important, we appreciate the work that they have undertaken on behalf of the Liberian people. They faced enormous challenges when they assumed their respective offices, and although many challenges remain, much has been accomplished since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in Accra last August.

The most significant of those accomplishments is unquestionably the near-full deployment of United Nations peacekeepers and the relative calm that they have brought to Monrovia and environs. The calm and stability remain fragile, but we commend the peacekeepers and encourage their sustained deployment outside Monrovia. We very much appreciate the efforts of troop-contributing countries, and we urge current and potential troop contributors to support the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

We welcome indications that peacekeepers of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) will work closely with peacekeepers in neighbouring countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Close cooperation and collaboration among UNMIL, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) will serve the interests of all three peacekeeping operations and of peace and security in the region.

We take note of the meetings between the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and the exchange of liaison officers highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2004/430). We hope that continuing exchanges of ideas will result in the development of concrete plans for cross-border activities and the sharing of resources, and we look forward to further developments on this issue.

While military deployment has speeded up and has nearly reached authorized levels, civilian staffing for UNMIL lags behind. We are very concerned that the Special Representative should have all the means necessary to carry out his work. We encourage all parts of the United Nations — in Monrovia and in New York — to do whatever is necessary to ensure that UNMIL has the right staff in a timely manner.

A key task for UNMIL has been the disarmament and demobilization of combatants. Successful completion of those activities has often been identified as the key to Liberia's lasting stability and security. We

need to disarm and demobilize the fighters in order for the political process to go ahead, and we need to support reintegration efforts in order to minimize future threats. We also need to be sensitive to the simultaneous returns of internally displaced persons and of refugees, as well as to the needs of the communities to which those groups are returning. Illiteracy, unemployment and a lack of prospects afflict all those groups equally. We recognize the particular significance of ex-combatants and the risk they pose to the political process, but we must also keep in mind their civilian victims, and we must not be seen as rewarding ex-combatants. We can best reach that balance not by slowing or ceasing disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR), but by devoting similar energy and resources to assist all the other war-afflicted groups.

We would urge that all parts of the United Nations system involved in the DDRR process begin the RR phase immediately. We are concerned about the gap between the DD and the RR. We understand that disarmament and demobilization — which got off to a bit of a rocky start — have been well under way since being restarted in mid-April. We encourage serious collaboration with non-governmental organizations in Liberia and with others with relevant experience to ensure continued success in the DD phase. And we urge rapid commencement of rehabilitation and reintegration. Only serious and sustained assistance programmes will discourage former combatants from returning to political violence or from embarking on criminal activity.

We also urge the Liberian factions to do their part for DDRR. The ultimate responsibility for DDRR belongs to Liberians themselves, albeit with strong support from the international community. The Secretary-General's report (S/2004/428) notes that just over 30,000 combatants have been disarmed but that fewer than 15,000 weapons have been collected. We are concerned that more weapons have not been brought in, but we recognize that not all combatants had their own weapons and that most combatants are still reluctant to give up their weapons. Their faith in the peace process is understandably fragile, and they continue to feel a need to rely on their guns as the sole source of security and livelihood. We propose that the current emphasis on demobilizing combatants and dismantling the militias be followed by consideration of how to ensure that the weapons are permanently out of circulation.

In conjunction with DDRR, as Jacques Klein mentioned, my Government is taking the lead on security-sector reform. We have sent a 30-person assessment team to Liberia to consider security-sector issues. Its members are now drafting its recommendations for a reform plan. We will direct a significant part of our bilateral funding for Liberia to that effort in recognition of Liberia's need for professional defence forces and of the need to replace Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and ex-Government forces with a serious, professional and trained force loyal to the new Government of Liberia.

Security-sector reform is a large task. Although we expect to play a significant role, we encourage other donors to step in and work with us. I would add that, as many members know, one of our security assessment team members was tragically murdered in Monrovia last week. We are saddened by that loss, but it does not diminish our commitment to completing and pursuing this important task in Liberia.

Liberia needs both short-term humanitarian and long-term development assistance. We must support immediately the establishment of an effective police force and a functioning judiciary, and must ensure that there are adequate resources for elections next year. February's donor conference was a huge success. It represented a unique collaboration of key assistance actors on a results-based framework, and donors responded enthusiastically, pledging roughly $500 million. However, four months later, less than 20 per cent of those pledges have been met. We urge donors to stand by their commitments and not to let the fact that the spotlight has perhaps moved away from Liberia's immediate crisis to be an excuse for those needs not being met. We would urge donors and stakeholders to coordinate. Cooperation has generally been good, but it would be useful to have a more disciplined sharing of plans to ensure maximum coverage of needs. We encourage donors to pay particular attention to returns of refugees and internally displaced persons. We anticipate the return of 850,000 to Liberia, including half a million internally displaced persons and 350,000 refugees.

We also encourage the National Transitional Government of Liberia to work with United Nations agencies, donor Governments and non-governmental organizations to ensure that programmes are in place to receive all the returnees and to ensure that their return is sustainable. Again, the responsibility belongs to Liberians, with support from the international community.

My Government notes the initial steps that Chairman Bryant and other members of his Government are taking to institute control over Government revenue to ensure that funds are spent appropriately to benefit the people of Liberia. These are welcome developments, and we applaud the ongoing efforts.

However, there will be no lasting change in Liberia absent the establishment of values that reflect honesty, trust, service, transparency and accountability. It has been suggested that we should ease current restrictions imposed by the Security Council on Liberia under resolution 1521 (2003), particularly in the areas of diamonds and timber. We too look forward to that day. However, my delegation respectfully has a different view of the current situation and believes that a history of corrupt practices in Liberia has fostered an environment in which abuses of power were permitted to flourish. The time has come, as resolution 1521 (2003) states, for the National Transitional Government to establish transparent accounting and auditing mechanisms to ensure that all Government revenues are not used to fuel conflict but instead are employed to improve the lives of all Liberians. We note the Chairman's description of some of the positive steps that have been taken in that direction.

Finally, despite the best efforts of committed Liberians, United Nations staff and members of the international community, Charles Taylor continues to remain a threat to Liberia. We continue to believe that Taylor should be held accountable for his actions in Sierra Leone and should appear before the Special Court.

Before closing, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for chairing this timely and critical meeting, and for allowing us to have such a robust and comprehensive statement. I must also re-emphasize the intention of the United States to work closely with our colleagues in Monrovia, with Chairman Bryant and with our Security Council colleagues here in New York to ensure a brighter future for the people of Liberia, who deserve no less than our continued engagement as they rebuild their nation.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): I take this opportunity, Sir, to congratulate you heartily on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to wish you much success in your term as President. I extend compliments to Ambassador Munir Akram for his very successful conduct of our work during the month of May, which was characterized by a highly demanding agenda.

My delegation welcomes both the presence and the important and encouraging statement of the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, His Excellency Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant. In addition, I express appreciation to Special Representative Jacques Klein for introducing the report of the Secretary-General and for the work he has been carrying out as Head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

My delegation welcomes the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed at Accra in August 2003. The present report (S/2004/430) lists a number of positive developments that have taken place within the period under review: improved conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and for the beginning of national recovery; establishment of an interim national police force; progress in judicial reform and in the promotion of the rule of law throughout the country; empowerment of the Cabinet of the National Transitional Government; the appointment of a new National Elections Commission; and the development of legislation relating to the establishment of an Independent National Human Rights Commission and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

UNMIL has been central in providing adequate security conditions for the implementation of the Accra Agreement. We are very pleased to learn that UNMIL has successfully relaunched its programme of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) and that, since December 2003, 58 per cent of the anticipated number of combatants have been disarmed. It is particularly gratifying to know that an intensive public information programme

has decisively contributed to that result. My delegation has always insisted on the relevance of public communication in complex operations, in particular that of radio broadcasting.

Nonetheless, the Secretary-General's report also takes due note of the low number of weapons being surrendered in the disarmament process. We are concerned by information received from the Panel of Experts on Liberia that arms trafficking has not been dismantled and that factions could easily rearm. We believe that the complete deployment of UNMIL and cooperation among peacekeeping operations in the region can contribute to addressing this threat. Furthermore, renewed efforts should be made to support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the implementation of its moratorium on small arms. As a matter of fact, in the light of the discussion held by the Council last week on complex crises (see S/PV.4980), cooperation with ECOWAS in developing programmes that could have an immediate social impact in Liberia should also be envisaged by the international community.

At present, greater attention should be devoted to job-generation activities through supporting both labour-intensive enterprises and individual economic initiatives. Failure in providing economic alternatives may damage current DDRR efforts. In that context, the Economic and Social Council could have an important role to play in assisting in the management of economic recovery; the experience gained in Burundi and Guinea-Bissau could be instrumental to that effect, as pointed out by the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Marjatta Rasi, at last Friday's meeting.

Our delegation welcomes the positive developments taking place as a result of the adoption of a regional approach by UNMIL, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau in the implementation of their mandates. It is also heartening to learn that the human rights situation in Liberia and access to humanitarian assistance have improved since March. The continuous training of law enforcement agents will contribute even further to that end.

Before closing, I would like to congratulate UNMIL and the National Transitional Government on the progress now being achieved in Liberia and to appeal to donor countries to help the National Elections Commission in mobilizing the material and human resources needed for the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections in October next year as stipulated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The risks involved in postponing democratic elections would be too high to be ignored.

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I am confident that, with your experience and diplomatic skill, you will successfully guide the work of the Council this month. I should like also to take this opportunity to congratulate my good friend Ambassador Akram on his successful leadership of the work of the Council last month.

I should like first warmly to welcome Mr. Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, who has travelled so far to be with us. His statement was very helpful to the Council's understanding of the current situation in Liberia. I should like also to thank Mr. Klein, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing in connection with the report of the Secretary-General.

The past year has been very eventful for Liberia. With the resolute assistance of the international community, the long period of war and turmoil in Liberia has come to an end and the long-hoped-for peace has arrived. Since the establishment of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, headed by Chairman Bryant, serious efforts have been made to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, promote the peace process, bring about national reconciliation and undertake the process of national recovery and economic reconstruction. Liberia is embarking on a new and historic phase of development. We are sincerely gratified to see the positive change in the situation in Liberia, and we offer our heartfelt congratulations to the National Transitional Government of Liberia for the tangible achievements made since it took office.

We sincerely hope that all sides in Liberia, on the basis of the achievements already registered, will seize this opportunity to strengthen cooperation and work

together to promote the stability and development of the nation.

In our view, there are three priority tasks. The first is to endeavour to extend the Government's authority throughout the territory of Liberia. The second is to expedite the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, and the third is to ensure effective control over national resources.

Chairman Bryant has expressed the wish that the sanctions on Liberia be lifted as soon as possible. We fully understand that wish. We endorse the idea that the Security Council should make a decision on that question as soon as possible.

Since its deployment under the leadership of Mr. Klein, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has overcome many difficulties and has worked to nurture and safeguard peace and stability in Liberia. We commend the work done by the Mission and hope that, in the light of the development of the situation, it will further strengthen its coordination and cooperation with the National Transitional Government of Liberia and help it to promote capacity-building.

We call on the international community expeditiously to fulfil its pledged commitments and to help Liberia to consolidate peace and realize development. Liberia is an important West African country whose peace and stability are important to the region as a whole. We hope that the National Transitional Government of Liberia will further strengthen good-neighbourly relations with the countries of the region and support UNMIL in the framework of continued and strengthened communication and cooperation with United Nations missions in other West African countries, in the common effort to achieve peace and development in the region as a whole.

We look forward to the forthcoming recommendations of the Council mission that will soon leave for West Africa with respect to a comprehensive strategy and solutions to cross-border issues.

China has actively supported the peace process and post-war reconstruction in Liberia. Chinese peacekeepers are participating in UNMIL, including in engineering, transportation and medical units. China has also provided, to the extent of its capabilities, economic and financial assistance to the Liberian Government. We are prepared to work with other members of the international community in continuing tirelessly efforts to achieve comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in Liberia.

The President: I thank the representative of China for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Baali (Algeria): I would like first of all to associate myself with those who have expressed their appreciation and admiration to Ambassador Munir Akram and his able team for the remarkable manner in which Pakistan conducted our work last month. I would like also to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and to assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Algerian delegation.

It is a great honour for the Council to receive today Chairman Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, and to hear his views and expectations regarding the role of the Security Council and of the international community at large in support of the remarkable efforts of the Liberian people and Government aimed at rebuilding a peaceful, safe and prosperous Liberia.

I would like also to express our thanks to Mr. Klein for his comprehensive briefing and to commend him, as well the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), on the encouraging developments achieved so far in the peace process in Liberia.

Chairman Bryant has clearly outlined the challenges that the Liberian people are still confronted with. For Liberia, the process of healing from the wounds inflicted by the war will certainly be a long and arduous one. The problems are numerous and difficult to solve, and the transition from emergency recovery to reconstruction and rehabilitation will require tremendous efforts and huge resources. The impatience of the Liberians, especially ex-combatants, will rise as peace and stability are restored throughout the country.

Yet the news is encouraging, and success is well within reach. We are in that regard very impressed by the improvement of the security situation, by the fact that the transitional institutions are functioning smoothly, and by the significant progress achieved in the peace process, in particular regarding disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the progressive restoration of State authority throughout the country.

Furthermore, the international community has been quite supportive, as demonstrated during the international conference that took place last February here in New York. The international community is indeed fully aware that there is no alternative but to succeed in Liberia. As a matter of fact, failure would have dramatic consequences, not only for the Liberian people, but also for the security and stability of the entire West African region.

In that regard, there is a broad consensus, which we welcome, within the international community and within the Council, on the necessity of adopting a global and regional approach when dealing with the issue of instability in West Africa and when addressing the factors that have been fuelling insecurity in that subregion for more than a decade.

In that context, I would like to commend the personal commitment of Chairman Bryant and his tireless efforts to promote good relations with Liberia's neighbours, at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. The holding of the summit of the Mano River Union, which took place on 20 May, is a very welcome step towards the activation of dialogue and cooperation among the States of the region. In that connection, I would respectfully ask Chairman Bryant if he could offer us some comments with regard to the outcome of that very important event.

Finally, we are fully aware of the importance that Liberia attaches to the lifting of sanctions, and we entirely agree with its argument on the moral, social, economic and humanitarian impact of sanctions. The sanctions were imposed for the sake of peace in Liberia. Last December, the Security Council revised the legal basis of the sanctions regime in order to bring sanctions into line with the new political realities in Liberia. The Government is a partner for peace of the Security Council. It is therefore our view that the issue of sanctions should no longer be a source of controversy between Liberia and the Council.

In conclusion, I once again thank Chairman Bryant and wish him every success in his very demanding duties.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

Mr. de La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor in a public meeting this month, at the outset I wish you, Sir, all the best during your presidency for the month of June. I also thank Ambassador Akram for the manner in which he conducted the Council's work last month, which we greatly appreciated.

First, I welcome the presence among us of Chairman Bryant. On behalf of France, I take this occasion to commend him on the remarkable effort he is making for his country's recovery. We all know that his task is great. I simply wish to tell him that today he can count on my country's support, and on that of the Council, I am sure.

I also thank Mr. Klein for his briefing on the situation in Liberia, which we listened to with great attention.

I must say that the information we have heard is very encouraging. It is encouraging for three reasons. First, it is encouraging because the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), now at a staffing level of just over 14,000 persons, is today able to deploy over the entire territory. Secondly, it is encouraging because — and this is essential — as Mr. Klein has told the Council, the disarmament process has been resumed. The fact that 34,000 ex-combatants — if I remember the figure correctly — have been disarmed gives hope for new stability in Liberia. Finally, it is encouraging because security sector reform is under way.

Chairman Bryant mentioned the issue of lifting the sanctions imposed on his country pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003). In that connection, we note with great interest the action taken by the Liberian Government and UNMIL to restore State control over natural resources. We encourage the Liberian authorities to continue their efforts in that direction. The Council will continue closely to follow the progress made on that issue with respect to the criteria set out in resolution 1521 (2003).

Significant progress has therefore been made. However, to achieve lasting stability, Liberia must still face three major challenges.

The first challenge is the lasting demobilization of combatants, which comes up against two hurdles. The first hurdle is to reduce the number of weapons in circulation, and we are concerned by the difficulties that seem to be encountered in recovering weapons. The second hurdle is to reintegrate ex-combatants into civilian life. That task is certainly the most difficult

one and will require a lasting effort by the entire international community. France will participate alongside its partners in the European Union.

The second challenge is the rebuilding of the State and basic public services. That is essential for the people of Liberia to benefit from the newly recovered peace.

The third challenge is to hold free and transparent elections in October 2005. In Liberia, as elsewhere, credible elections are the sole guarantee of a successful end to a crisis. The success of those elections and the commitment of all parties to the democratic process are the measure by which one will be able to judge the solidity of the peace process in Liberia. As has often been said in the Council, a lasting and solid peace process in Liberia is a guarantee for peace and security throughout the region.

In conclusion, I express our satisfaction at the efforts for coordination among the United Nations operations in West Africa. My country has always urged such coordination. We have always believed that the sharing of information and logistic resources, joint efforts at the borders and coordination on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are indispensable for strengthening the effectiveness of each operation. We hope that the United Nations operations will continue on that path.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of France for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

Mr. De Palacio España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): In this first public meeting of the Security Council under the Philippine presidency, we express our best wishes for the success and the positive outcome of the Council's work. We pledge our delegation's support. As well, we express our esteem and gratitude for the work done by Ambassador Munir Akram during the Pakistani presidency of the Council in May.

We are especially grateful for the presence of Chairman Bryant and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Klein, at this public meeting, which is particularly timely because it is taking place days after the publication of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2004/430) and a few short weeks before a Security Council mission is to visit West Africa, including Liberia. We express our satisfaction at the words of praise of the Special Representative for Chairman Bryant. We congratulate the Chairman on that.

For our part, we wish to make some comments with respect to the situation in Liberia. First, we appreciate the efforts made to date by the National Transitional Government to implement the necessary political, economic and social reforms, to which Chairman Bryant referred in his extensive briefing. We encourage him to continue working actively along those lines, with the support of the international community. It is gratifying that the Cabinet of the National Transitional Government meets regularly and that most government posts have been filled.

We believe that the fundamental priority at the moment is to make progress in the overall security situation, which, in our view, is comprised of three main elements. First is the full deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in the entire country. The second element is the satisfactory continuation and conclusion of the process of demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants. We have been reminded of some of the consequences if that crucial process were to fail. Third is reform of State security institutions.

With respect to the full deployment of UNMIL in terms of both the overall staffing level and the Mission's presence throughout the national territory, we note and welcome the fact that the deployment process is scheduled to be completed at the end of this month.

With respect to the process of demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and rehabilitation, we welcome the progress made since its resumption in mid-April. Nevertheless, it is worrisome that, as has been highlighted, the number of heavy weapons surrendered so far is still below what was expected and that, therefore, there continue to be large quantities of those weapons hidden, which could be used in the future to destabilize the fragile security situation of the country.

With respect to the reform of the State security institutions, we note with satisfaction the start, in early May, of the process to recruit new members of the police force. We also take note of the efforts to restructure the armed forces, which are becoming ever more urgent as the process of disarmament,

demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation moves forward.

With respect to the regional approach, we are pleased to note that, on 29 April, another meeting took place in Dakar between the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, organized by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. The future formulation by the three missions of joint plans and modalities aimed at ensuring more effective control of the common borders is an important initiative, which we welcome.

Lastly, despite the evident achievements that have been made thus far, major challenges to the peace process in Liberia remain, as has been noted. These include ensuring the success of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation programme, to which I referred earlier; stabilizing the security situation; extending State authority throughout the entire country; and, above all, preparing for the elections that are scheduled to take place in October 2005 and that should go ahead as planned, with no delay. In this context, we take note of the appeal made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Council and to the international community. We would also like to refer to transparent management of economic resources and to improvement in the humanitarian and human rights situation — areas where progress has occurred.

All of these issues constitute complex challenges that require the resolute commitment of the Transitional Government, supported by the international community. We encourage the Transitional Government and UNMIL to continue their efforts in those fields and assure them of Spain's support as they traverse the path ahead of them.

The President: I thank the representative of Spain for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Smirnov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to say how pleased we are to see you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council for this month. We are ready to cooperate closely with your delegation. We greatly appreciate the work done by the representative of Pakistan during the month of May, and express our gratitude to him.

We thank Chairman Bryant and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Klein, for their very comprehensive briefings on the situation in Liberia. We support the main conclusions of the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/430). We note that some progress has been made in stabilizing the situation in Liberia. At the same time, a number of important tasks remain on the agenda for a Liberian settlement.

Chairman Bryant dealt in detail with the tasks that need to be undertaken to ensure the effective and transparent management of the national resources of his country. We support the efforts of the National Transitional Government in that regard. At the same time, we believe that questions pertaining to the security situation in the context of the disarmament and reintegration process, as well as problems relating to the extension of the authority of the Transitional Government throughout the territory of the country, remain priority tasks on the political agenda, in the framework of the efforts of the Transitional Government, including preparations for the elections which are planned for 2005.

In that context, we would like to ask a number of specific questions. We would like in particular to know how the establishment of a new national army is being dealt with. What elements are going to be included? What will its approximate size be?

The report of the Secretary-General refers to the illegal transportation of heavy weapons through the territory of Liberia. How serious is that problem? We would be grateful for more detailed information in that regard.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to start by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I assure you of our full support and cooperation with a view to ensuring that this month, too, will be a very successful and productive one for the Council. We have no doubt that that will be the case, given your great skill and the able manner in which you are conducting our business.

I would also like to reiterate our gratitude for the commendable conduct of the Council's work by

Ambassador Munir Akram and his team during the month that has just ended.

I wish to welcome the presence in the Council Chamber and the participation in this meeting of Chairman Bryant and his delegation. Their presence provides a very good — indeed, historic — opportunity for a productive dialogue between the Security Council on the one hand and the Liberian authorities and the Liberian people on the other.

That dialogue will certainly enhance the preparations for the forthcoming Security Council mission to West Africa, including Liberia, which we hope will take place later this month. Chairman Bryant's presence is also a mark of the qualitative change in the situation prevailing in Liberia compared with that of six months ago. That is proof of the personal qualities and commitment of the members of the Government of Liberia to the cause of the people.

I would also like to thank Mr. Klein for the clarity of his briefing, and to commend the personnel of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for the successful way in which they have been implementing the mandate of the Mission. The results achieved so far have exceeded our expectations. That demonstrates that the leadership and the political and material support of the Council and the international community are among the determining factors in dealing with complex crises.

The situation in Liberia continues to be a central question for the Security Council and for the continent. During the solemn launching of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union just over a week ago, heads of State or Government, while welcoming the progress being made in the peace process in Liberia, noted, however, that there is still much to be done to ensure that peace is truly consolidated in the country. It is therefore timely that the Security Council is meeting to review the situation in Liberia and to welcome the progress that has been achieved.

In his most recent report (S/2004/430), the Secretary-General described the ceasefire as largely holding, while recognizing that the security situation remains fragile, owing to the fact that the disarmament process has yet to be completed. That is also a fact, judging from what we have been told this morning.

The consolidation of peace in the country will depend mostly on the achievements of the Government of Liberia during this critical, but key, transitional period of the country, from war to peace and from relief to first steps of recovery.

As has been repeatedly said, the Government of Liberia will be able to handle this transitional period only if its efforts, the political will of the Liberian people and political forces involved in the process are duly and promptly complemented by adequate assistance from the international community. This meeting could be a good opportunity for the Council to reiterate the support of the international community.

The challenges faced by Liberia are indeed enormous. Evidence of extensive destruction to infrastructure and the social fabric is overwhelming. According to the Secretariat's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, of Liberia's population of 3.3 million, 1.7 million people are in need of assistance, 80 per cent live below the poverty line, 35 per cent are undernourished and 75 per cent do not have access to clean water, while unemployment has reached 85 per cent. The Government has also to face the burden of refugees and displaced persons and the difficult task of restoring State authority.

Faced with that economic and social environment, the Government has spared no effort to build peace in Liberia, and that is very commendable. The main question remains how to make the peace process irreversible in such a fragile situation.

It is our view that to make this positive trend irreversible, the key role will have to be played not only through the efforts of Liberians, but also through the international community's implementation of the commitment made at the International Reconstruction Conference for Liberia, held in New York just a few months ago, in February. In that connection, it is a real concern that of the $522 million pledged, only $66 million have been received so far.

By presenting the Results-Focused Transitional Framework, the Government of Liberia and the partners have clearly pointed out not only the needs to be met, but also the right way to ensure a successful transition and sustainable peace. Chairman Bryant has shown his personal commitment to the successful execution of this Framework by heading the Implementation and Monitoring Committee itself.

As was established during the Security Council meeting on complex crises and the United Nations, held last month under the Pakistani presidency, Liberia is one of those complex crises in which the link between peace and development must remain at the core of the international community's response.

God endowed Liberia with natural resources that can contribute significantly to the prosperity of its people. Assistance from the international community should therefore focus on helping Liberia to exploit those natural resources for the benefit of its population. We commend the Government of Liberia, and Chairman Bryant in particular, for the administrative, political and economic reform measures, which have been presented in a very detailed form to the Council this morning.

We welcome the role of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in assisting the National Transitional Government to restore proper management of the country's natural resources and in devising mechanisms for ensuring accountability and transparency in the collection and disbursement of revenues, as well as in restoring institutional capacities and a legal framework to end impunity.

UNMIL is putting in place adequate tools for Liberia for a lasting solution to the problems affecting the country, as that will enable full control of the situation by the Liberian Government. The establishment by the Transitional Government of a task force to deal with Security Council sanctions is further proof of its political will and commitment. Those efforts also call for adequate Council attention. We are of the opinion that the Council needs to respond effectively to help and to respond to the plea made by Chairman Bryant here this morning concerning the ending of sanctions.

Liberia has been described in the recent past as the epicenter of subregional instability. Progress made towards peace is evident. The restoration of confidence between the countries of the region is under way, and useful lessons have been learned from the conflict in Liberia and neighbouring countries that have enabled the United Nations to develop a regional approach. That will also prevent new conflicts in the region.

The commendable work being performed by UNMIL, the Economic Community of West African States, United Nations agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as other partners, constitutes steady steps towards the stabilization of Liberia. It is our conviction that the political will and the unity of the Liberians is a key factor. With the assistance of the international community, Liberia will regain its rightful place in the world and will play its role as a pioneer of the United Nations and African unity, a key player for the political independence and economic integration of Africa, as well as a symbol of freedom for the entire continent.

To paraphrase what Chairman Bryant said just a little while ago, leadership is about inspiration. Chairman Bryant inspires us to continue to work with him and his Government toward building peace in Liberia and reconstructing that great country.

The President: I thank the representative of Angola for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): First of all, I would like to join other delegations in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. I would also like to express my appreciation for the able and efficient way Ambassador Munir Akram conducted our business last month. Next, I would like to thank Special Representative Klein and Chairman Bryant for their briefings. Those briefings have given us confidence that recent developments both on the political side and with regard to the overall security situation are encouraging.

Let me make three short remarks. First, we of course welcome that the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has now been able to deploy throughout the country, and that has contributed, in our view, to a significant improvement in the still-fragile security situation. With the progress that has been made, it seems to us that UNMIL could become a model for the new type of multidimensional peacekeeping missions the Council has been aiming at. In that respect, UNMIL's increased use of quick-impact projects is of particular interest to us. Quick-impact projects appear to be a useful tool. We would like to see that option further explored, not only by UNMIL, but also for its potential for other United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Secondly, the successful first phase of DDR, with the disarmament of militias, was a crucial step towards further stabilization in Liberia. The next step must now be the swift integration of the former combatants. In this respect, I would like to draw attention to the situation of former female combatants, of whom more

than 2,600 have already been disarmed, according to the Secretary-General's report. We hope that a situation similar to what we have witnessed in the DDR programme in Sierra Leone can be avoided. Council members will recall that, in Sierra Leone, a significant number of female ex-combatants ended up being completely excluded from the reintegration programmes of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). That is to say that we acknowledge efforts made with regard to gender aspects of United Nations peacekeeping missions, including UNAMSIL and the United Nations Mission in Liberia, but we would like to see those efforts given more attention in the future, as well as being clearly reflected in the reports.

My third and last remark is on cooperation between United Nations missions in West Africa. We welcome their joint operations in the border regions and we would like to encourage them to consider further steps in that direction. It is our hope that progress can also be made in the efficient pooling of resources so that the heavy financial burden on Member States can be eased.

As far as the sanctions are concerned, we thank Chairman Bryant for his very substantive comments on the issues related to the measures under resolution 1521 (2003). We will take them into due consideration during the upcoming mid-term review.

The President: I thank the representative of Germany for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): As the Security Council is gathered this morning for its first public meeting in June, I should like to convey to you, Sir, the congratulations of my country's delegation on your assumption of the presidency and to assure you of our full cooperation in guaranteeing the success of your mandate.

I should also like to express here our deep admiration of Ambassador Akram of Pakistan for his skilful guidance of the Council's work last month.

We are grateful that you, Sir, have organized this briefing of the Security Council, allowing us to hear the important statements on the situation in Liberia made by the Chairman of the National Transitional Government and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia. We welcome them to New York and pay tribute to them for their commendable work in the service of peace.

The progress made in the deployment of troops throughout the country has allowed the successful relaunching of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement (DDRR) programme, the impact of which, it must be said, will be felt beyond the borders of Liberia. We would therefore congratulate and thank all the troop-contributing countries that have made this beneficial step possible.

All of the Liberian parties must now mobilize to consolidate the yet fragile security situation in the country, which is unfortunately still prey to internal struggles among factions and numerous criminal activities. In this respect, we urge the factions to cooperate honestly and diligently with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) so as, in particular, to accelerate the disarmament and demobilization of combatants.

We reiterate the priority we attach to the reintegration and repatriation aspects of the programme and welcome the efforts made to that end by certain donors, including the United States Agency for International Development, the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union. The success of the DDRR programme is essential to the country's recovery and to the fulfilment of the promise of regional stability to which we wholeheartedly aspire.

We note the efforts made by the National Transitional Government and the National Transitional Legislative Assembly to fulfil their responsibilities in the peace process. These efforts, along with those of UNMIL, are establishing a genuine momentum that should be supported more intensively by the international community. In that regard, the assessment provided in the Secretary-General's report points to the urgent need for the establishment of certain essential services within the country, such as the provision of electricity, water and public health care, through the development and implementation of quick-impact projects and the creation of literacy centres for the people and especially for ex-combatants.

The precarious security situation within the country lends particular urgency to the need to launch the training programme for the Liberian National Police and to strengthen the judicial sector. This will help to improve the living conditions of the population

and thereby ensure its support and ever-increasing cooperation with the peace process. The extremely limited financial means of the National Transitional Government in facing this challenge require the rapid mobilization of resources anticipated from the international community on the basis of promises made in February at the International Reconstruction Conference for Liberia.

With respect to elections, there is no doubt that the future of Liberia is largely dependent on the establishment of conditions conducive to their organization and holding. The efforts of the National Transitional Government and UNMIL in this area lead us to believe that they have taken the full measure of what is at stake in October 2005. In this regard, we welcome the positive developments represented by the establishment of the National Elections Commission and of legal frameworks for the creation of the Independent National Human Rights Commission and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We remain concerned, however, by the delay in reviewing, ratifying and issuing certain important legal texts, especially those on human rights. We stress the need to ensure that truly national political parties are created, free of all regionalist, ethnic or tribal tendencies and answering solely to the precise criteria established in advance by a charter of parties. We believe that substantial assistance, including financial, could be considered within the framework of activities to promote good governance in that country. That would, moreover, be a good way to promote national reconciliation.

With respect to sanctions, we are sensitive to Chairman Bryant's excellent arguments in favour of lifting them soon. We believe that the Council will address this issue in the near future. However, with respect to sanctions imposed against individuals, we feel that an evaluation of their impact is required in order to ensure their effectiveness. Available information would seem to indicate that resolution 1532 (2004) has had only limited effect on the targeted individuals.

At the regional level, my delegation welcomes the nascent cooperation among the United Nations missions in the subregion. We welcome the activities and joint measures being undertaken by the missions. We await with interest the report of the Secretary-General and his recommendations on the regional approach to implementing the mandates of those missions. Benin is determined to continue to work closely with all those who are striving to maintain this new hope for a lasting peace for Liberia, for the Liberian people and for the West African subregion so that they can return to the path of peace, stability and sustainable development.

In conclusion, I should like to ask the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to tell us what kind of difficulties have caused the recent insurrections by ex-combatants in Monrovia and what measures are being planned so that such insurrections will not take place again.

The President: I thank the representative of Benin for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Let me join colleagues, Sir, in wishing you every success in your stewardship of the Council and in thanking Ambassador Akram and his colleagues for what they did in the month of May.

I should like to begin by thanking Special Representative Klein for his report and Chairman Bryant for the way in which he set out the positive developments which have taken place in Liberia. I think we owe the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the Special Representative and the Transitional Government a particular debt for the way in which they have taken a very grave situation through to the progress that can be recorded today.

As the Security Council, we can take pride in what the United Nations has been able to contribute to the developments in Liberia. I look forward personally to being in Liberia within three weeks' time to see first-hand — with the Security Council mission — how those developments have taken place and to explore with the Special Representative how the United Nations is acting coherently to tackle the problems, how to give him the support he deserves, how we position the United Nations effort in Liberia against the effort in the region as a whole and how the effect of developments in one country impinge on those efforts, but also how, in aggregate, we can be quite confident that we are doing everything we ought to do to support him in his courageous efforts and that we can report back to the Council that the United Nations is playing, with maximum effect, the part it ought to play.

Against that background, I should like to quickly make three points. First, we welcome the progress made on security sector reform despite a fragile situation in Liberia. The security situation is holding. The United Kingdom very much welcomes the establishment of a Rule of Law Implementation Committee to coordinate the reform of the police, the judiciary and the correctional system. The progress made so far demonstrates that the rule of law and how it applies in practice are actually basic to taking a State in the condition in which Liberia found itself towards the destination we would all like to see. To support that, of course, there needs to be rapid agreement with regard to the restructuring of the armed forces and to the establishment of reforms outside Monrovia, in other regions of the country.

Secondly, we welcome UNMIL's efforts with regard to disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement (DDRRR), which are crucial to the development of Liberia. Mr. Klein's efforts to relaunch that programme and to get it firmly on track are very much to be encouraged. What we need is a concerted effort to ensure that the necessary financing and the necessary programmes are in place — as he has argued — for long-term, sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration.

My last point is to address the question of sanctions. We have heard an impressive case from Chairman Bryant as to why sanctions should be lifted. That has been endorsed by the Special Representative, and we must be mindful of that. We are also aware of the history and of why we came to be in a position to need sanctions. I welcome the Chairman's suggestion that experts might visit soon in order to validate the progress which has been made and, as I understand it, to assess that progress against the conditions which were attached in the first place: the reasons why we needed sanctions. I think it is absolutely right that we should do that and that the review — which is intended in any event — should be a positive sign of encouragement of what has been achieved. Then we shall see where that leaves us on the sanctions. Clearly, we need to recognize progress and to provide every encouragement. But, on the other hand, we need to ensure that there is no abuse. I think the objectives are shared. The question is how we do that in a way that will tap the economic benefits that we want to see, which are crucial, as we have heard.

There is an apparent contradiction, however, in seeking to lift sanctions on exports of diamonds and then saying, "By the way, we will not export, because we need a voluntary restraint arrangement until we have Kimberley certification". I think the case would be stronger if we could demonstrate that the Kimberley Process was being fully implemented, and that therefore the logical thing to do was to put in place the lifting of sanctions. But that is a detail. I think that the principle that we should look at it rigorously, both against the conditions and against the case the Chairman has made and the progress he has achieved, is absolutely right. The United Kingdom will take part constructively in that discussion.

I end where I started: we very much look forward to the Security Council demonstrating its commitment to Liberia and the region, especially by starting the voyage in Accra. We will work with the Economic Community of West African States to demonstrate, too, our support for regional organizations carrying on the good work.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Let me start by expressing to you, Sir, the warm felicitations of the Pakistan delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. This is a month that will undoubtedly tax your considerable skills, but we have no doubt that it will be a most successful, even if eventful, presidency. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of my colleagues who have made such kind and generous comments about last month's Pakistan presidency.

It is a signal honour for us to welcome Chairman Bryant to the Council and to thank him for his comprehensive statement outlining the achievements of the Transitional Government. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jacques Paul Klein, for his report on the activities of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). I think both of the statements we heard today are important statements requiring reflection by the Council and its members.

First, our discussions in the Council on Liberia — like those on other conflict situations in Africa — have, I believe, led us to understand that some of the fundamental requirements for achieving the objective

of sustainable peace are the following: the provision of credible security; a viable political and peace process; and, thirdly, economic recovery, reconstruction and development. In the case of Liberia, it would seem that we are on pretty sound footing as far as the first two prerequisites are concerned. We think that UNMIL has done a remarkable job in difficult circumstances.

We commend Mr. Klein and his team, and indeed the entire United Nations family that has worked in Liberia. They have, we think, transformed a very difficult situation into a manageable one.

As Mr. Klein remarked the other day, UNMIL is going to be a successful Mission. We welcome the fact that it will soon be fully deployed. Pakistan's participation in that Mission is a matter of pride and a reflection of our strong commitment to the cause of peace in Africa. We particularly welcome the cooperation between the peacekeeping missions in Liberia and in neighbouring countries.

The change in circumstances in Liberia has also been helped by the improved political climate in the subregion. That has also had an immediate positive impact on the way sanctions are implemented. For example, the current report of the Panel of Experts on Liberia states that no violation of the arms embargo has been reported since August 2003. On that issue, we note the comment made by Chairman Bryant that war was over in Liberia, that Liberia was at peace with its neighbours, and that the purchase of arms was not a priority for the Transitional Government.

Having said that, I must turn to the third major requirement, which is post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction. It is clear that Liberia requires resources and institutional capacity, and there is also the imperative of bringing the peace dividend to all sectors of its population, especially the young adult males, to which both Mr. Klein and Chairman Bryant referred.

Resources, of course, are the key. To a large extent, all of this is dependent on adequate and sustained international assistance. Again, Mr. Klein has said that there is a future for Liberia if the money comes in. Worryingly, though, this is not happening so far. We have been informed that 75 per cent of the pledges made at the reconstruction conference in February are yet to be redeemed. The principal option, therefore, for the Liberian Transitional Government must be to generate resources, especially through the use of its own natural wealth. Chairman Bryant has made an impassioned and credible plea for the lifting of the sanctions regime against Liberia.

Pakistan, together with several other members of the Council, has emphasized the clear distinction between the arms and travel bans, on the one hand, and the economic sanctions — that is, the sanctions on diamonds and timber — on the other. There is a need to approach the two sets of sanctions separately, in our view. We have heard from Chairman Bryant that the sanctions have a punitive impact on the efforts of the Transitional Government to bring peace and stability to the country, and the Council needs to reflect on that.

Resolution 1521 (2003) implicitly recognizes that such an impact could happen, and it provides for regular review of the diamond and timber sanctions, with a view to terminating them as soon as possible once the conditions are met, in order to create revenue for the reconstruction and development of Liberia.

Given the progress made by the Liberian authorities in the case of diamonds, we can, hopefully, look forward to utilizing that provision in the resolution as soon as possible, with a view to the lifting of the diamond sanctions. We note Chairman Bryant's assurance that Liberia would not export diamonds until it joins the Kimberley process, and we construe this as a positive confidence-building measure.

Chairman Bryant has also outlined the measures taken to respond to the international community's concerns regarding the timber sector, and this, too, we believe, is a positive indication.

In conclusion, let me say that Pakistan looks forward, in the months ahead, to the completion of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) programme; and to a comprehensive review of sanctions, with a view to lifting them as soon as possible, paired with the full commitment of the resources which have been pledged by the international community for the reconstruction of Liberia. The forthcoming Security Council mission to West Africa, which will be led by our colleague Ambassador Jones Parry, will, we hope, strengthen the commitment of the international community to Liberia's re-emergence as a stable and prosperous country and to the realization of the objectives of peace and stability in the entire region.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for the kind words he addressed to the Philippine presidency.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): Sir, I hope you will accept the last, but no less true and sincere, expression of delight at your assumption of the presidency and of confidence in the able discharge of your responsibilities during what looks to be a particularly eventful period in the life of the Security Council.

I wish also to commend Ambassador Akram and the Pakistani presidency for an outstanding performance in guiding the work of the Security Council during the month of May.

We are also grateful and appreciate very much both the presence and the insightful and comprehensive presentations made by Chairman Bryant and by Special Representative Klein. I should like also to say a special word of appreciation for the nice gift - the nice plate that Ambassador Klein gave to each member. It reminds me of a previous encounter I was pleased to have with Ambassador Klein, when, in a previous incarnation of his, he gave me a plate with an inscription related to the mission he successfully completed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I wish him continued success.

Romania is also very pleased to acknowledge the progress made towards sustained peace and reconstruction in Liberia, as well as the steps taken in this regard by Chairman Bryant and his National Transitional Government. We fully commend the efforts of the Liberian authorities and encourage them to carry out, in a most determined manner, the measures and plans needed to lay the foundations of good governance and socio-economic development.

At the same time, we take this opportunity to convey our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Klein and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for their important contribution to the stabilization and national recovery of Liberia. We are encouraged by the results of their work. Indeed, 17,500 combatants disarmed in one month is but one impressive indicator of the successful discharge of their duties.

I would like to limit myself to just a few observations and questions directed to the kind attention of our invitees.

First, now that the disarmament and demobilization process is firmly on track, the focus will be reoriented towards the reintegration aspects of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) programme, as an essential condition for attaining the overall objectives of securing peace and social reconstruction. Since any major gap between these phases could have serious destabilizing consequences on the ground, we would like to ask, especially Mr. Klein, whether reintegration capabilities match the very high caseload of demobilized combatants.

Secondly, the security situation in the timber-producing areas of Liberia still seems to be highly precarious, impeding the proper functioning of the Forestry Development Authority throughout the territory of the country. We would be very interested to hear from Mr. Klein about prospects for improving this situation after the full deployment of UNMIL, in parallel with the plans for the gradual establishment of civil authority throughout Liberia. We would also appreciate any further comments by Chairman Bryant on this issue, taking into consideration the general efforts to restore State authority throughout the country.

And thirdly, one month ago, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Liberia and Sierra Leone met in Monrovia, along with the Force Commanders and civilian police commissioners of UNMIL and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), to discuss efforts to improve cross-border security and review progress in the DDRR exercise in Liberia. I would appreciate Mr. Klein's assessment of the outcome of that meeting one month later.

The President: I thank the representative of Romania for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I join in the congratulations to the Philippines on its assumption of the presidency. The Council will face great challenges this month, and I am certain, Sir, that you will be equal to those challenges.

I also thank the Mission of Pakistan and Ambassador Akram for their excellent work last month.

I welcome the presence of Chairman Bryant at this meeting of the Council. I also thank Mr. Klein for his introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/430) and for the complementary information he provided.

We are pleased to note that deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is almost completed, as scheduled. The Mission will thus reach its authorized strength at the end of this month. The ceasefire agreement is being observed on the ground, although we judge that the security situation will continue to be fragile until the disarmament process is complete. Of course, disputes among factions and criminal activities continue to pose a threat to security, but, fortunately, they have not put the peace process in jeopardy.

An important step has been taken with resumption of the process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) on 15 April. As we have noted, disarmament and demobilization are essential components of the peace agreement and are a prerequisite for tackling the reintegration of ex-combatants.

The report of the Secretary-General underlines the conditions that must be met in order for elections to be held in October 2005. It is a complex process, and it is advisable that preparations begin immediately, as the report indicates.

The adoption of a regional focus in West Africa is already under way with the strengthening of cooperation among the United Nations missions in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, as prescribed in the Council's presidential statement of 25 March 2004 (S/PRST/2004/7).

In that connection, we welcome the fact that on 20 May, at Conakry, Guinea, the leaders of the Mano River Union countries met to reactivate the Union. We hope that the Council's mission to West Africa at the end of June will produce concrete recommendations, in compliance with the regional dimension of its mandate.

In conclusion, I wish to express my country's satisfaction at the progress made by UNMIL in carrying out the various aspects of its mandate.

Finally, we have duly noted Chairman Bryant's statement on the important measures the Transitional Government is taking. We wish him — and Liberia, of course — all the best in the near future.

The President: I thank the representative of Chile for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

I should now like to make some very brief comments in my capacity as the representative of the Philippines.

First, I thank Chairman Bryant and Special Representative Jacques Paul Klein for coming all the way from Liberia to brief the Council on the latest developments there. The important and comprehensive information and views they provided are significant inputs for the Council discussions on Liberia to be held next week. We are also pleased to note that the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) continues to make steady progress in stabilizing Liberia and creating the necessary security conditions for implementation of the Accra Agreement.

The deployment of UNMIL troops throughout the country augurs well for the implementation of the programme of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation — a crucial element for Liberia in what Chairman Bryant has called breaking through. I hope that the support given by UNMIL will assist the National Transitional Government of Liberia in performing its functions even as the various government institutions are being rebuilt and strengthened.

The Philippines has consistently maintained that a regional approach is crucial to achieving peace and security in Africa, and more so in the subregion of West Africa. Generally, local actors are more sensitive to the context and the content of the various problems there. They are usually better placed to understand local dynamics and have a greater stake in a return to peace. Thus, we welcome the efforts undertaken in that regard, such as the participation of Chairman Bryant in the Mano River Union summit held in Conakry, Guinea, on 20 May 2004 and the meetings of the various United Nations peacekeeping and political missions in West Africa over the past few months. It is expected that the Council's mission to West Africa the last week of June will dwell further on the regional approach and come up with more ideas for the application of that approach.

In that connection, and having in mind the situation of West Africa, where the three largest peacekeeping operations in the world are deployed, I would like to ask how inter-operable UNMIL, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)

and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONOCI) are in cases where cross-border operations have to be mounted in the present or near future.

I resume my function as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Jacques Paul Klein to respond to questions and comments.

Mr. Klein: First, let me thank the Council collectively. Each member has received a folder containing the basic mission briefing, other background material and a small gift for their continued support. At present, in my mission, I have 89 nationalities — from Australia to Zimbabwe. We have 13 of the 15 members of the Council represented in our mission. It is truly a United Nations mission, and the Council can be extremely proud of what the men and women in the mission are doing.

With regard to the issue of the ratio of weapons to disarmed personnel, the Council should recall that a good number of those personnel were women, who did not necessarily have a weapons but who serviced mortars, did the cooking and provided other basic support to the fighters. We made the decision early on that they were indeed part of the combatant force and that we could not leave them out. The same goes for the children. That is why one often sees a discrepancy between the number of combatants and weapons and the actual total numbers. I think that has to be factored in.

With regard to reintegration, that is our major concern now, obviously. In a country with an 85 per cent unemployment rate, how do you integrate another 45,000 to 50,000 people into society? Fortunately, members of the Council — specifically members of the European Union, the United States and others, bilaterally — have come through, and we have some major programmes. We have a programme for about 35,200 in the context of our own DDR trust fund. The United States Agency for International Development has come up with a programme whereby it will take an initial 10,000 — 2,000 a month — to give them basic skills and then put them out repairing roads, repairing bridges, et cetera.

We have also engaged the Liberian business community. I personally wrote letters to the whole entrepreneurial infrastructure, including, for example, Firestone. I said, "You now need to take 300, 400 or 500 young people into an apprentice programme. You need to teach them how to do business". We are doing the same thing with the merchants within Liberia itself. All of those things are in process.

Our relationships with our contiguous neighbours are excellent. I can tell you candidly — I want to put this on record — that we owe a great debt to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for its strong support during our start-up phase. Many of our personnel came from UNAMSIL. Much of the equipment I have — the Bailey bridges, generators and logistics support — came from that Mission. We have had regular meetings.

You need to know that we have exchange programmes — military and civilian — with other missions, both in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, and with the liaison officer in Guinea. I have French officers on my staff from Côte d'Ivoire. My people are in Côte d'Ivoire, as well. We have the same relationship with our colleagues in UNAMSIL. I can tell you — I hope that I am correct — that as far as I know, as of today we have seen no major movement of weapons. That is, we patrol by air. Members of the sanctions Committee were out there themselves. They also monitored timber cutting; they monitored gold and diamond mining. We have found no abuses to date in that respect. We are watching the situation very carefully, because the rumours are obviously ongoing.

Besides the numbers that you have in your folder on weapons taken in, there is a whole separate category that we are also collecting. Through informants, with a bag or two of rice and a little money, sizeable weapons caches are coming in. In Lofa county three weeks ago, 80 millimetre mortars and several hundred rounds of ammunition were brought in by an informant. We do not tally that, because it does not relate to a specific combatant — it is a cache coming in.

Once the majority of the weapons are in our hands we will have — and we have already started on this — a very intensive programme to find out where the other weapons might be. As you know, in the DDR programme we have basically hired — they are on our payroll — 48 of the generals from Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and the former Taylor faction. They actually work with us. So when we say to General Cobra, "Please bring 250 personnel to this road junction tomorrow morning", they show up. The reason for doing that is that we want to

maintain command and control for as long as we can over the belligerents out there. What we do not want is for the system to break down, with nobody any longer in charge.

So that implies what all of you have said: quick disarmament and quick demobilization, working with the local commanders who still maintain discipline.

As for the question about the future Liberian defence structure, that is something that, ultimately, the Liberian Government and its own people will have to decide. My own view is simple: Liberia does need a defence structure. What should it be — an expanded State Border Service, a national army? The first question to ask — speaking from 35 years as a general officer — is, "What is the mission of this army?" That is the first question. That then defines the budget, which defines how many personnel you have and what kind of weapons you can buy. Ideally, Liberia does need something on the border to control illegal migration, smuggling, et cetera. Also, when you are working in three eight-hour shifts doing something constructive you are not out plotting coups somewhere.

Secondly, if the military is structured properly, it can also be an instrument for nation-building, where for the first six months you do reading and writing and people are brought together. The second six months you learn a basic skill — whether driving, refrigeration repair, fork-lift operating, it does not matter. The you do some military service, and then you return to wherever you came from. And two or three years from now, when you meet somewhere, what do you have in common? The commonality is your military experience together, which binds and heals nations and breaks down ethnicity.

So those are the things that we are looking at. Again I would like to thank the Government of the United States in this case, which is taking the lead and hopefully will eventually provide funding for a future Liberian defence structure. But ultimately it is up to the Government of Liberia to decide what it needs and what it wants.

Lastly, on the issue of sanctions, to me — and perhaps because I am a former military person I see things rather simply — sanctions were put in place to penalize the previous Government for egregious wrongs. That Government has gone, a new Government is in place. If that new Government can demonstrate the transparency and the accountability that you desire, then ultimately we have to say "Yes, sanctions should be lifted". If you do not, you deprive it of the very revenue source that it needs to build a State. Then we, collectively, wind up paying the bill, which ultimately Liberia could sustain if it had the revenue resources, from at least timber and some of the other things that are needed.

So I would ask you to look at that. I understand your concerns. It is a question of transparency and control. Does the money flow into a central bank account? Is there accountability? All of that. But if that can be demonstrated, then I do not think that we have any other recourse but to give the Government of Liberia the tools that it needs to meet the future.

I hope that answers most of the questions.

The President: I thank Mr. Klein for the comments and clarifications he has provided to the Council.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant to respond to the comments and questions.

Mr. Bryant (Liberia): Somebody asked a question about our relations with our neighbours. I think they are good — I think they are very good. I have been to Conakry, Guinea, four times, I think, at the last count. I have been to Côte d'Ivoire three times. I have been to Freetown twice. Since I have been here in the United States I have received a personal phone call from President Tejan Kabbah. This is thousands of miles from where we were eight months ago. The leaders of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire were simply not talking to us. The fact that I can go into Conakry, Freetown or Abidjan and sleep at peace tells you we have come miles in our relationship. The good thing also is that we are all resolved that we want to live at peace now. We are all resolved that we will initiate common security measures to ensure that there will be no more cross-border armed incursions and no more trading in light weapons or heavy weapons across our borders bringing hardship to our people.

I have lived in Liberia since birth. I have lived there through all of our crises. I supported the Security Council decision to impose sanctions on us because of the profanity of what our Government was doing at the time — mutilating little children, mutilating old people and pregnant women. How could anybody in his or her right mind condone such acts? It was shameful for us. Some of us were so ashamed that we found solitude in

our bedrooms — we were too ashamed to even show our faces outside as Liberians.

But I assure you that today it has changed. Eighty-five per cent of the kids we are disarming say, "We want to go to school". They are 22 years old today, but they want to go to school. And that is why we need resources: to build schools, to build clinics, to build infrastructure, so that the partners who come in and want to sincerely work with Liberians do not also have to invest in access roads, power generators or clean water to live and work. That is why we have come to make this case. I thank Council members for giving me an audience and for all their kind and warm comments about us.

The President: I thank Mr. Bryant for his additional comments and clarifications.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. May I take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Council, our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Klein, and to Chairman Bryant for taking the time to come to brief the Council.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 17.50 p.m.